Snoring and your health

Approximately 20% of the adult population, and 60% of men over the age of 40 snoring regularly, it may be common but it is not harmless.

New Delhi, March 06, 2017: The cause of snoring is air flowing through the open mouth and causing the soft palate (side area around the back of the tongue and the tonsils) to vibrate. This results in the production of sound “the snore”.

Medically, snorers are found to be more prone to:

- Heart attacks
- Sudden death
- Arrhythmias

Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement said that “Snoring — with or without sleep apnea — is a very real health concern and should not be disregarded as a mere nuisance rather, it should be acknowledged as a real health condition. Snoring is a sign of disrupted sleep, which can lead to many health problems. Some of the causes of snoring and their effects are relatively benign and can easily be remedied by simple things such as changing your sleeping posture or moderating your alcohol consumption.”

Certain conditions can predispose to snoring. These are:

- Enlarged tonsils or adenoids
- Congestion in the nasal sinuses
- A deviated nasal septum
- Loose dentures
- Nasal polyps
- Sleeping on your back (causes the tongue to fall back and block the windpipe partially)
- Aging causes the throat muscles to become flabby. This is also caused by alcohol, and certain drugs like tranquilizers, pain killers, or sedatives, all of which depress the brain and cause the muscles to be loose.
“Untreated obstructive apnea often results in high blood pressure, which can lead to an increase in heart size creating a higher risk for heart attacks and strokes. People with sleep apnea run the risk of a higher chance of having cardiac arrhythmias, most commonly of which is atrial fibrillation. Lifestyle habits play an important role in this and can be effectively managed. Alcohol, smoking, and some medications increase muscle relaxation allowing the flesh of the throat to relax and disrupt airflow. Smoking also irritates the nasal passages and throat muscles causing inflammation of these areas and further restriction of airflow. ”, added Dr K K Aggarwal.

**Practical remedies for this malady**

- Find the cause and treat it if snoring is due to any of the above conditions. Corrective measures should be undertaken and it may stop snoring.
- Sleeping on the side: The tongue does not block, the airway and hence helps to prevent snoring for this purpose a ball is stitched on the back of the night suit shirt to remind the person to sleep on the side.
- A special anti snoring pillow can be made in which the portion under the neck is higher than the one under the head, hence extending the neck this prevents snoring.
- Lose weight if you are overweight, especially around the belly.
- Stop smoking as smoke irritates the nasal mucosa and the throat.
- Sleep without dentures if you use them.

**Sources:**
http://www.alaskasleep.com/blog/snoring-signs-causes-risks-health-condition
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/?icid=hjx004

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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